

~~SECRET~~

27 August 1948

25X1A2g

Subject: The International of Seamen and Harbor Workers (ISH)  
and the Case of Ernst Friedrich Wollweber

The attached operational study is forwarded for the benefit of desks and field stations in whose areas Communist Parties have an opportunity to organize maritime units. The strategic significance of Communist work in maritime unions as well as in port and dock areas needs little recapitulation. The lack of operational facilities to furnish adequate coverage of potential maritime courier routes, sabotage and intelligence organizations has so far prevented progress in this field.

The attached brief is a compilation of available data which at least furnishes some general and specific (personnel) background information on past methods of international Communist maritime operations. In the first section an account of the International of Seamen and Harbor Workers (ISH) is given; the second section is a study of the ISH leader Ernst Friedrich Wollweber, currently active in Berlin; the appendix contains biographical information on personnel connected with the ISH, Ernst Wollweber and maritime work in general.

It is impossible to devise at this moment a target plan for the coverage of clandestine Communist maritime work, since only effective long-range penetration of Communist-dominated maritime unions or units can provide even a basis for such operations. It should be kept in mind that with the continued deterioration of East-West relationships, national Communist Parties, especially in Scandinavia and France, will certainly be called upon again to intensify penetration of the merchant marines for espionage, sabotage and communication purposes.

Individuals in the appendix marked with an asterisk should be given priority in identification attempts and collection of further personality and activity information.

This document should not be distributed outside the organization, but items of information in it (with the exception of those marked) can be provided to liaison services as the basis for procuring additional info.

*all pencilled notes on this copy  
have been entered on cards  
for revised study of ISH.*

25X1A9a

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## I. THE INTERNATIONAL OF SEAMEN AND HARBOR WORKERS (ISH)

Although the ISH itself did not come into being until the early 1930's, the roots of the organization can be traced back to the founding of the Profintern shortly after the end of World War I. The Profintern, or Red International of Labor Unions, as it was then called, was organized at a congress in September 1919. It was to be a federation of trade unions, acting in rivalry to the already established International Federation of Trade Unions, with the aim of gaining absolute supremacy in the trade union field in order to provide the Comintern with the means of stopping industrial effort whenever and wherever necessary. The Profintern, although ostensibly an independent organization, was in actuality subordinate to and controlled by the Comintern by means of Comintern representatives on the Central Council of the Profintern, whose concurrence was necessary in all important decisions.

The national sections of the Profintern generally bore the designation "Red Trade Union Opposition," or a variant thereof. The German section was so called, and one of its leading members in the years before the beginning of the Nazi regime was Ernst Wollweber.

At a seamen's conference held in Moscow in October 1921, it was decided to set up a chain of international clubs for seamen under the direction of the Profintern. These institutions, called Interclubs, became very successful and multiplied rapidly during the 1920's. They were later to form the nuclei of ISH propaganda and courier activities.

There are several differing versions of the actual foundation of the ISH. In Out of the Night Jan Valtin reports at some length on a conference of the Maritime Section of the Profintern, held in Moscow in 1930:

"The conference had been called to formulate plans for the organization of an International of Seamen and Harbor Workers, and of Red waterfront unions on all continents. The new International was to be created within a year, after a world-wide preparatory campaign. Its chief task was the mobilization of seamen for the protection of the Soviet Union in case of war, by tying up the shipping of nations antagonistic to Russia. Concurrently, the new International was to serve as a battering ram for the destruction of all wartime unions which could not possibly be brought under Communist control." 1

1. Jan Valtin, Out of the Night, p. 205 f.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Present at this conference was Albert Walter, who later became the head of ISH. Valtin himself, who had also attended, was put in charge of the Interclubs in Rotterdam, Antwerp, Ghent and Dunkirk.<sup>2</sup>

Of the other available reports, only one mentions the Moscow meeting. The others claim that the formal founding of the ISH took place at a seamen's congress held in 1930 in Hamburg. Delegates from a number of countries, including Great Britain, U.S., China, France and Germany were present. Although one of the objects of this meeting was undoubtedly to make it appear that the ISH was an independent organization, free of all ties with Moscow, such a situation never existed. The ISH continued to be in effect part of the Maritime Section of the Profintern, and as such was at all stages indirectly controlled by the Comintern. However, to the world, it was to appear as a self-governing organization, and in order to lend support to this myth, ISH headquarters was set up in Hamburg. (After the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, ISH headquarters was moved to Copenhagen and the following year to Antwerp).

The objectives of the ISH were varied. They included:

- a. maintaining contact, through a courier chain, among Communists in various parts of the world, and particularly with Communists inside Nazi Germany;
- b. assisting political refugees in obtaining shelter, food, and money;
- c. carrying on pro-Communist, anti-Fascist propaganda;
- d. smuggling illegal literature into Fascist countries;
- e. procuring material of intelligence interest - in particular information on maritime affairs - and forwarding it to the Soviet Union;
- f. committing acts of sabotage against vessels being used for purposes at variance with the interests of the Soviet Union

Between 1933 and 1945, emphasis shifted gradually from the more innocuous of these to the unpublicized functions of sabotage and espionage, and during the war the organization under Wollweber's direction was almost exclusively concerned with the latter two.

Besides these functions, the ISH also engaged, in the maritime field, in the revolutionary activity expected of all echelons of the

2. Ibid., p. 207.

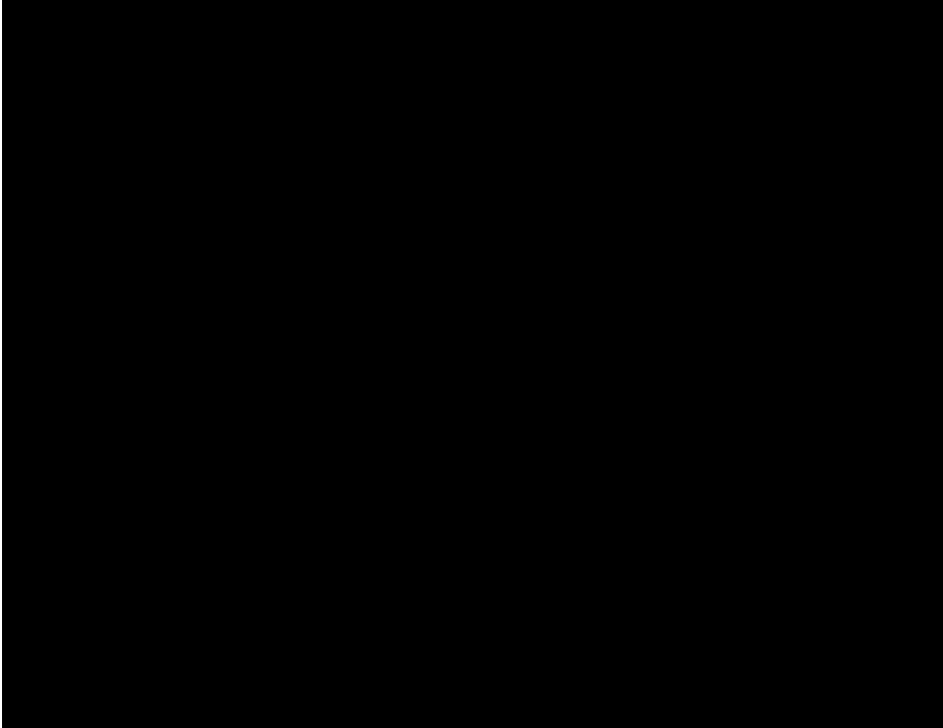
~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Communist Party. For ISH members this involved fomenting mutinies and dockers' strikes and engendering dissatisfaction among all seamen and river workers.

The ISH was governed by an executive committee of 35, reportedly elected at an international seamen's congress held in Hamburg in May 1932. There was also a secretariat; Albert Walter, as secretary, was the head of the whole organization. Walter was arrested by the Gestapo shortly after the beginning of the Nazi regime, and served some time in a concentration camp. Valtin reports having seen him at Fuhlsbittel late in 1933, and having heard in 1935 that he had turned traitor to his beliefs and was working for the Gestapo.<sup>3</sup>

25X1C8b



The ISH was organized on a world-wide basis. The central governing bodies, the executive committee and the secretariat, had headquarters in Hamburg until the banning of the Communist Party by the Nazis forced them to move, along with the Comintern's Western European Bureau, to Copenhagen. The following year (1934) their headquarters was transferred from Copenhagen to Antwerp. Under the central headquarters were several geographical bureaus, including:

---

3. Ibid., pp. 555 and 609.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

- a. American Bureau, New York, with jurisdiction over the U.S., parts of South America, and probably Canada;
- b. Scandinavian-Baltic Bureau, Copenhagen, responsible for Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, and Latvia;
- c. Continental and England Bureau, for England, France, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Portugal, Greece, Italy, and Germany;
- d. Pan-Pacific Bureau with one sub-center in San Francisco and another in Vladivostok, responsible for all countries bordering the Pacific;
- e. Soviet Bureau in Moscow, in charge of all organizations in the Soviet Union and of bases in Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Manchuria-Korea.

Membership in 1934 was estimated at 300,000 in the Soviet Union and 100,000 elsewhere.

According to Valtin, the ISH had organizations in twenty-two countries and nineteen colonies. Each of the countries involved was organized into so-called "national sections," under the jurisdiction and direction of the appropriate regional bureau. These sections were required to make periodic reports to ISH headquarters on their progress, and they received subsidies from headquarters for running expenses and occasionally for special one-time operations such as strikes. The monthly sum available to Albert Walter, during his tenure, for disbursements of this kind was reportedly \$52,000. The money came from SOVTOREGFLOT, the Soviet Shipping Trust, which deducted it from the wages of Soviet seamen and longshoremen.<sup>4</sup> After Walter's arrest, the sum varied between \$20,000 and \$45,000 a month.<sup>5</sup>

National sections were generally divided into four branches, with jurisdiction over seamen, longshoremen, rivermen, and high-sea fishermen respectively. The real basis of ISH activity, however, was the International Seamen's Club. Interclubs had been in existence before the ISH was founded, but under ISH direction their number increased and their strategic importance grew rapidly. By 1937 there were about fifty Interclubs in existence, at least one in every major port in the world. The clubs were essentially places of recreation for seamen of all nationalities, and on the surface appeared to have

4. Ibid., p. 306.

5. Ibid., p. 488.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

no motive other than that. Their real service, however, was as propaganda bases, recruiting centers, and links in the chain of Comintern communications. A typical Interclub had members whose duty it was to meet all incoming vessels and escort the seamen to the club, where there would be food and drink, amusements of many kinds, often with charming hostesses to share them, and, of course, posters, pamphlets and books, all expounding Communist theories and explaining the desirability of joining the Party. Since the Interclub was in some cases the only such institute in the port, and in many cases by far the best-equipped, it was an easy matter to attract the attendance of large numbers of seamen; many of these, once there, were easy prey to the written propaganda the club offered and to the persuasive arguments of the local members.

One of the main operational tasks reportedly assigned to Interclubs was the "internationalization of foreign strikers." This meant simply seeing to it that work should cease also in foreign ports on vessels belonging to a country hit by a strike. In the less publicized function of the ISH - collecting information for the Soviet Union - the clubs also played an important role: they were actually debriefing stations for many witting and unwitting informants, and it was generally at the clubs that seamen-couriers delivered and picked up their messages. One of the key functions of the ISH organization was its communications service for the Comintern. When international transfer of funds became restricted by many regulations, and public communications systems could no longer be used with safety by the Communists, the Party began to rely to a very great extent on the ISH and its seamen for the transport of funds, the relay of messages, and the smuggling of illegal literature. The Interclubs were favorable nerve-centers for this system.

The structure of the ISH, as in other Communist organizations, extended downward to the cell of several men. These cells were the lowest echelon of the national sections, where such existed, and generally fell into the four categories of seamen, longshoremen, rivermen, and high-seas fishermen. ISH members aboard ships or river boats were organized into boat groups, consisting of a group leader, a treasurer, and a contact man for liaison with the Interclubs. If

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

there was only one member aboard a ship, he was required to exert every effort to recruit others and to form a boat group.

This far-flung and intricate network was co-ordinated and kept in unity of policy and purpose by travelling instructors.

"Aside from its stationary functionaries, the ISH employed a corps of fifteen 'political instructors' who were constantly on the road, each of them responsible for the smooth functioning of the Communist waterfront apparatus in his territory - the Levant, the West Indies, the U.S.A. and Canada, the Scandinavian countries, etc." <sup>6</sup>

The central publication of the ISH, The ISH Bulletin, was published monthly in thirteen languages and sent to clubs all over the world from ISH headquarters. Most of the national sections also published their own newspapers. Another publication, the International Seafarer, was also put out by the ISH. Papers in more exotic languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hindustani, and Malayan, were printed in Moscow.

In the world of the early thirties, when many countries had not officially recognized the USSR, the ISH was of great strategic importance to the Comintern and to the Soviet. The Communists had to prepare against every eventuality, including war, and the ISH was one of their main weapons. It afforded them a means of organizing into friendly unions the vital trades of shipping, fishing, and river transport. Strikes by members of these trades could tie up the shipping of whole countries and prevent the supply of war materials to countries which might use it against the Soviet Union, or to countries engaged in an "imperialistic war" not in the Soviet's interests. The function of smuggling illegal material - both literature and actual instruments of war such as guns, ammunition, and dynamite - would assume greatly increased significance at a time of crisis. Perhaps the longest-range use which the Communists hoped to make of the ISH was as a pool of potential naval personnel. It was known that the merchant marine was looked upon in many countries as an important source of manpower for the navy in case of war, and it was hoped that ISH members could thus be infiltrated into the fleets of nations hostile to the Soviet,

---

6. Ibid, p. 307.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

there to spread the doctrine of Communism and possibly to carry out crippling acts of sabotage.

This brings us to the second phase of the ISH, one which has received far more notoriety than the first. Emphasis was switched in the middle thirties from organization to the sabotage and espionage functions whose importance had been pointed up by the threatening course of international affairs. In Out of the Night, Jan Valtin gives what may be an indication of this shift of policy. During Valtin's period of arrest in Gestapo prisons, after he had been instructed by the underground to feign renunciation of his Communist beliefs in order to gain his freedom as a Gestapo agent, he was required by the Nazis to furnish all information he knew concerning ISH organization and membership. According to his account, he wrote out a report giving some true facts padded with a great deal of misinformation. He adds: "I did not state, however, that this International had ceased to function as an independent organization; or that Moscow had decided early in 1936 to replace the ISH with a subtler and more secret form of marine organization."<sup>7</sup>

There appears to be no confirmation one way or the other of reports on the question whether the organization directed by Ernst Wollweber in western Europe in the thirties was actually a continuation of the ISH. There can be no doubt that such an organization, devoted to sabotage and espionage in Soviet interests existed, and that its leader was Wollweber, although he denied the allegation when interrogated by Swedish police in 1940. (In spite of his denial, the Swedish district court which tried his case considered it established that Wollweber had been the leader of a secret organization which existed for the purpose of perpetrating deeds of violence on vessels.) Moreover, although definite information on exact structural relationships may be lacking, it seems clear that Wollweber's organization made use to such a large extent of ISH personnel, methods, courier routes, funds and clubs that, for the purposes of this report, the two may be considered identical. Other sabotage organizations were also active at this time, and their relationship to the ISH is equally vague. Chief among these were the

7. Ibid., p. 663.

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

so-called POTSCH-BIESEMANN Organization and a German sabotage organization headed by one Pietzuch. 25X1C8b

25X1C8b

[REDACTED]

the organization was divided into three main staff departments (materiel, training, and communications) and several actual sabotage sections: Wollweber was leader of the whole outfit with headquarters in Copenhagen. The materiel department was primarily concerned with the transportation of explosives, usually dynamite, from country to country and from port to port. Harbors reportedly favored for this activity were Lulea, Gothenburg, and Stockholm in Sweden; Narvik and Bergen in Norway; Copenhagen and Frederikshavn in Denmark; Rotterdam in Holland; Antwerp in Belgium; and Hamburg and Bremen in Germany. A ship of the Millington Steamship Co., the Westplein, was frequently used to carry dynamite. A seaman aboard the Westplein, Willem Van Vreeswijk, assisted by the wireless operator, Willem Van Caen, was in charge of the transport of the explosives.

The training department was reportedly supervised by Wollweber directly. He gave instruction himself in practical sabotage. One of his star pupils at the time was Karl Bargstaedt (see appendix). The communications department was simply the network of ISH couriers who carried and smuggled funds and messages. Secret inks, letter drops, cover addresses, and other usual methods of clandestine communication are thought to have been used.

The sabotage section was divided into geographical groups. The Scandinavian group included Germany. The West European Section was headed by Josef Rinbertus Schaap (see appendix), reportedly Wollweber's right-hand man. He is mentioned in a State Department report which states that the German security police on 10 March 1941 sent a memorandum to the Swedish Criminal Police pointing out the Swedish connections of the "Schaap-Wollweber vessel sabotage organization." Under Schaap's jurisdiction were the Netherlands (leader until 1937, Arie Johannes Fey; thereafter, Achille Bequin), Belgium (leader, Alfons Fichtels), and France, where Schaap kept his headquarters. A group for eastern

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Europe, apparently primarily concerned with the Baltic, had headquarters in Tallinn, Estonia, and Riga and Libau, Latvia. Activity in North America was thought to be under the jurisdiction of the leader in Mexico. Focal points in this group were New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Montreal, and Vancouver.

The following excerpt, translated from a report dated 10 June 1941 by the German Security Police, is interesting as an indication of the extent to which Wollweber's activities were known to the Nazis and identified as ISH and Comintern machinations.

"(There) existed a.....terrorist organization, built up by the Comintern, whose principal task was the destruction of ships belonging at that time to the Anticomintern Bloc.

"It can be proved that members of this organization were active until 1940 and were trying to penetrate Reich territory from Denmark. Leader of this organization was the German emigre Ernst Wollweber, (who), ---after his emigration to Copenhagen in 1933, took over the leadership of the ISH, which as the professional international of seamen and harbor workers is the executive agency for the acts of sabotage ordered by the Comintern. He is entirely responsible for setting up and directing the sabotage groups formed on orders from Moscow in Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, and the former Baltic states. He supervised the procurement and transport of explosives, and controlled the generous funds provided by the Comintern for financing the organization and paying its agents.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Sabotage attempts on 16 German, 3 Italian, and 2 Japanese ships, which in two cases caused the total loss of very valuable vessels, can be traced to the activity of this communist terror group, which is spread over all Europe."

Among sabotage methods used on vessels were the following: mixing sand with lubricating oil, destruction or disabling of compasses, sawing through rudder chains at sea, ruining cargoes by changing hold temperatures or pouring on kerosene, sprinkling cement and water on new machinery, soaking grain cargoes with water to cause expansion, and many others. In the event of war, it was planned to seize ships by force and sail them to Soviet ports. Wollweber's saboteurs, however, did not restrict themselves to blowing up Axis ships. During the period of the Russo-German friendship pact, from August 1939 until June 1941, orders allegedly went out from Moscow to cripple or destroy vessels with cargoes destined for Allied nations. This charge was made in a compilation, attacked by Swedish Communists as a forgery, which came to the hands of Swedish police in February, 1940. The document was dated 15 November 1939, was in French, and appeared to be based on information from police authorities of several countries. It gave

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

names of members of three different sabotage groups.

The activities of Wollweber and his sabotage unit during the later war years are somewhat obscured. We know that Wollweber himself spent the period from May 1940 to November 1944 in prison in Sweden; a great many of his Scandinavian associates were also jailed at the same time; and it may be that the organization disintegrated with these arrests. After Wollweber's release from prison he went to the Soviet Union, and was not heard of again until late 1946, when he arrived in Berlin to take up a post in the Central Administration.

The question of a possible revival of the ISH has been a puzzling one. There is small doubt that the organization was never completely wiped out, for many members survived in many countries all over the world, though they may have become inactive. A German POW, a former member of the Gestapo who was interrogated in 1946, stated that ISH organizations "also flourished in overseas ports", that in his opinion they must therefore still be in existence, and that a reorganization on orders from Moscow could easily be effected. However, there have been only a few indications of possible renewed activity. Some of the men who were reported as connected with the Einheitsverband or the ISH are believed to have returned to their former areas and possibly to be resuming their former activities. Chief among these are the following: <sup>8</sup>

Hermann RADATZ - reportedly in Canada or England

Rudolf LEISLER - member of new courier chain in England

P. RUITER - Rotterdam member of new courier chain

Nathan WOTOWICZ - Amsterdam member of new courier chain

Georg MUELLER - reported active again in Amsterdam

Piet SAUTE (SAUTER?) - reported active in Duisburg and Ruhr area.

Gerhard KRATZAT - possibly in Berlin

There are among the available information here two reports which provide the only other faint indications of a revived ISH. One of these is a personality report on Gudrun Wiik, a Norwegian woman who was believed at one time to have been married to Wollweber (this is unconfirmed, but she was definitely his mistress. She is probably

---

8. For additional information on these men see appendix.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

the woman who was with Wollweber when he was arrested in Sweden in 1940). The report, received in August 1947 [REDACTED] stated that Wiik was then living in Norway working with the International Transport-workers' Federation (ITF) and the International of Seamen and Harbor Workers. This is the first mention since the war of the ISH as an existing and functioning organization. The other report is an account of an unexplained incident involving considerable damage to a ship. On 30 July 1947, the S. S. Sunetta, a Netherlands tanker, sailed from Rotterdam. Near the mouth of the barrier jetty at the Hook of Holland she struck a mine and foundered. Two sailors were killed, and the vessel was heavily damaged, but managed to return to dock. The Dutch Ministry of Marine stated that this channel was never mined, that it had been swept often, and that it would have been virtually impossible for such a large mine to drift into the position described. The Royal Netherlands Navy's investigation determined that the mine, of German type, was relatively new and recently laid. Two days before the accident a German named Heinz Hoyer was arrested near the scene, with a complete set of German "swimmer" or "fin" equipment. Dutch authorities believe him to have been a Russian agent. It was thought possible that the Sunetta's fate had actually been intended for the Volendam, which was scheduled to sail after the Sunetta but in fact preceded her, and was carrying 2300 Dutch troops for the Indies. Dutch action in the Indies had been the target of demonstrations and press attacks by Communists, and the "accident" may have been planned as a particularly violent demonstration against "Dutch imperialism."

While the case of the Sunetta may not offer very strong proof of the renewal of ISH activities, it still serves as an example of the type of occurrence on which attention should be constantly focussed. It would be imprudent at this time of insecure conditions not to anticipate the reconstruction of an organization which, in the interests of the Soviet, functioned so successfully less than a decade ago.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## II. THE CASE OF ERNST FRIEDRICH WOLLWEBER

As a revolutionary, espionage agent and saboteur, Ernst Friedrich Wollweber is one of the outstanding men of this age. Since his youth in World War I he has worked ceaselessly for the cause of the Communist Party of Germany and the worldwide revolution of the proletariat. His activities have extended throughout the world and have included espionage, sabotage, and terrorism in the crudest and the most refined forms. In prison or out, hunted by the police or walking in freedom, in Nazi Germany or elsewhere, Wollweber has never deviated from his course of action, and in spite of a full and often abandoned private life has never allowed personal considerations to influence his decisions. His history is a chronicle of tireless and unrelenting efforts to further the cause in which he unquestionably believes wholeheartedly.

Still active today, and still in high favor with the Soviet authorities, Wollweber brings to his present assignment in Berlin over a quarter-century of personal and practical experience. He is considered one of the most clever and dangerous Communists in Europe.

Ernst Friedrich Wollweber was born 29 October 1898 in Hanover, Germany. His father, a miner, was killed early in World War I, and at the age of seventeen Ernst joined the Socialist Youth. He had become a riveman, and was active in smuggling defeatist propaganda to the western front. One day, however, he participated in the sinking of some cement barges in a Belgian canal to block transport of war materials to the front. This act was too radical for the Socialists and Ernst, expelled from the Party, promptly joined the Spartacists, and at the same time volunteered for the Imperial Navy. Although he later developed an outspoken aversion to theoreticians, stating that he preferred action to dialectic, during his Navy days he read a great deal of Communist literature, and by the end of the war he was a convinced Marxist. He became a stoker on the battleship Helgoland, and in November 1918 it was he who raised the first red flag over the fleet and called for mutiny and revolution.

His first enthusiasm was restrained during the next few years by Party leaders, who felt that the time for violence had not come, and that utilization of parliamentary methods to gain control was more

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

desirable. A born activist, Wollweber was restless under such restraint, and in 1920 he resorted to a spectacular feat in order to gain the attention of the leaders of the Soviet Union. Together with a comrade named Hermann Knueffgen, who was also to enjoy some notoriety as a Communist, he hired himself out on a German trawler and hid away ten other Communists in the fish tank. When the boat was well away from Germany, Wollweber released the stowaways, overpowered the captain and crew, and announced that the boat was appropriated by the Communist Party. Then, without charts or maps he and the others sailed the trawler up the coast of Norway and down to Murmansk, where they presented it as a gift to the Soviet Union. This act made a great impression in that country and Wollweber was granted interviews by Lenin and Stalin. The latter was so favorably impressed by his ability and forthright manner that he made him Chief of the Maritime Section of the Profintern. Stalin later persuaded him, however, to take up the political opportunities which had been offered him, pointing out that under parliamentary immunity he would be better able to build up a strong Communist organization

Wollweber apparently took this advice to heart, for he rose rapidly in the ranks of the Party. He became a member of the Red Trade Union Opposition (Rote Gewerkschafts Opposition, the German section of the Profintern). He was made chief of organization of the Communist Party of Germany. Finally, in 1932, he was elected to the Reichstag as a Communist deputy, although he kept well in the background of that body's deliberations, preferring to play the role of a shirt-sleeved proletarian little interested in weighty political discussions.

Early in 1933, shortly after the Nazi rise to power, the Communist Party was outlawed in Germany, and its various organizations were moved to adjacent countries. Among these was the West European Bureau of the Comintern, which was moved to new headquarters in Copenhagen. Wollweber went along with it, and very soon thereafter he also took over the leadership of the outfit with which his name has been associated ever since: the International of Seamen and Harbor Workers (ISH).

From 1933 until 1940 Wollweber worked at this assignment, travelling widely -- and illegally -- throughout western Europe and Scandinavia. He traveled under assumed names and on false passports, but with his

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

great experience and much luck managed to escape arrest for a long time. During this period, when he made Copenhagen his headquarters, Wollweber was personally responsible for forming and directing, on Moscow orders, sabotage groups operating in Germany, Scandinavia, Holland, France, Belgium, and the Baltic countries. He supervised the procurement and transportation of explosives and other sabotage material, and administered the large sums of money supplied by the Soviets for financing the organization and paying its agents. He often participated personally in dangerous jobs such as the smuggling of explosives across national borders. He was particularly active in taking dynamite, stolen by his subordinates from the Kiruna iron mines in Sweden, to Norway, where it was used in acts of maritime sabotage.

It was this dynamite activity which eventually resulted in the arrest of a number of Wollweber's co-workers and the virtual dissolution of his organization in Sweden. Swedish agents had stolen large quantities of dynamite from the Kiruna mines. Some of it had been stored for a while in Gothenburg, in charge of the Communist leader of that city, Sven Rydstedt. Carelessness on this man's part resulted in his being followed by police to the warehouse where the dynamite was stored, and he was arrested immediately. The bags of dynamite revealed fingerprints, and with these to go on the police were soon able to arrest five co-workers from the Kiruna mines. One of the five, a man named Ceder, turned State's witness and told the police where they would be able to find Wollweber.

The Swedish police, however, were able to produce only enough evidence to charge Wollweber with using a fraudulent passport. Wollweber had arrived in Stockholm in September 1939 by airplane from Moscow. He was travelling on a Swiss passport made out to one Hans Koller. As the passport did not have the necessary visa, the Swedish authorities told "Koller" to reclaim it at the offices of the Criminal Police, where an emergency visa would be affixed. Wollweber quite naturally never appeared there, and the ensuing investigation revealed his real identity. Warnings were put out and the Swiss Legation was informed, but Wollweber remained beyond grasp until May 1940, when he was finally arrested by the Swedes. This time he produced a Danish passport, in the name of Fritz Koller. The woman with him, who was probably Gudrun Wilk of

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Oslo, claimed to be a Norwegian, and although her papers were in order she was held under the Aliens Act.

"Koller" admitted almost immediately that his passport was false and that he was really Ernst Wollweber. During the course of his interrogations he stated further that in 1932 he had been elected Reichsleiter of the "Einheitsverband der Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter und Binnenschiffer," which had its headquarters in Hamburg, and that in 1933 he had left Germany illegally and had sojourned ever since in Scandinavia and the Soviet Union. He also admitted having used false passports on previous occasions for trips through Sweden, and for this he was sentenced by the Stockholm Magistrates Court 17 July 1940 to six months' hard labor. In August the Swedish Government decided that both Wollweber and the woman must be deported, but that the former must first serve his full time. The woman chose to be deported to the Soviet Union, and left for Moscow in September.

Early in 1941 there arose an amusing competition between Germany and the USSR for the extradition of Wollweber. The Germans submitted a claim on the grounds that Wollweber was strongly suspected of having set fire to German vessels or vessels in German ports on three different occasions, thereby causing the death of human beings. This claim was later supported by a supplementary one which added three more vessels to the list. Within two months the Swedish Government received a request from the Soviet Government for Wollweber's extradition to that country for crimes he had allegedly committed there in 1939.

As a consequence of these requests, Wollweber, who had served his six months, was arrested again and held for a final decision. He showed natural reluctance to return to Germany, but seemed quite willing to face a Soviet court. In March the German Security Police submitted a memorandum to the Swedish Criminal Police which concerned the "SCHAAF-WOLLWEBER vessel sabotage organization" and accused Wollweber of being head of all European sabotage activities. The Swedish Government thereupon decided to make a detailed investigation of the secret sabotage organization in Sweden, combined with raids on Communist offices throughout the country and arrests of suspicious persons. In June this action took place, and a number of people were taken into

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

custody. Wollweber, interrogated during this phase, admitted having had connections with several of those arrested, all of whom had held high positions in the sabotage organization in Sweden. He had instructed one of them, he stated, to seize dynamite from the Kiruna mines, which was to be used for sabotage in Sweden in the event of a war with the USSR. Wollweber did not admit that he was the leader of a sabotage organization. Nevertheless, the Juikasjärvi District Court found that "Wollweber had been the leader of a secret organization, the purpose of which had been to counteract Fascism by means of deeds of violence, primarily by blowing up vessels with dynamite, and that he had inspired several seizures of dynamite at the mines in Kiruna with the intention of using the explosives to damage other people's property." He was finally sentenced on 12 November 1941 to three years at hard labor.

When his term was up, in November 1944, Wollweber left Sweden and proceeded to the Soviet Union. There is little information on his activities from that time until 1946, although he was reported to have been seen once or twice in Denmark and in Sweden.

In March 1946 Ernst Wollweber returned to Berlin. He arrived from Moscow in a Soviet military plane, and was immediately furnished accommodations and transportation facilities by the Soviet Military Administration. Within a few weeks he was given a position by the SMA in the Shipping Division (Abteilung Schifffahrt) of the Central Administration for Transport, as section chief in charge of inland waterways. The appointment was made through the chief of the Transport Department of the SMA in Karlshorst, Major General P. A. Kvashnin, who ordered Dr. Herbst, at that time director of the Shipping Division, to give Wollweber instruction in governmental administrative practice, since Wollweber had had no previous experience along this line.

It soon appeared, however, that Wollweber was not very anxious to receive such instruction, feeling resentment at being placed in the position of a student and also at Herbst's remonstrances at his irregular hours and lack of interest. He told Herbst quite openly that his job as an administrative functionary was only a cover for more important political work. As a result of this dispute, Herbst was transferred to the post of Director of the Generalinspektion Wasserwirtschaft, and his former position was taken over on 1 February by Ernst Wollweber.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

It is generally known within the Administration that Wollweber performs work other than managing the Shipping Division, but curiosity about it is reportedly discouraged by the immediate attentions of two MVD officers located in the same building (Central Administration Bldg., Leipzigerstr). The Shipping Division, now known as "the most dangerous department in the Administration," has a staff considerably larger than that which would be required to conduct normal business. Wollweber is known to make frequent trips to Wisnar and Rostock. He is assisted in his work by one Frau Maria Weiss, the deputy director, a fanatical Communist who first came to the Administration for Transport as personal assistant to Kuhne in the Personnel Division.

One of Wollweber's principal jobs is said to be the clandestine distribution of printed material, for which he allegedly receives a monthly allotment of 70 tons of paper (roughly enough for 185,000 copies of the New York Times). The material, destined for Scandinavia, the U.K., and the U.S., is reportedly sent out from the Wisnar field office of Wollweber's department.

25X1C8b

~~SECRET~~

25X1C8b



The latest indication of Wollweber's private address was in a report of 12 November 1947, which stated that he was living in Lehnitz near Oranienburg, Waldring 19, an estate furnished him by the Russians. Living there with him was his mistress of the moment, one Frau Vater, who had accompanied him from Moscow in March 1946. Frau Vater was reported to be head of the Statistical Department of the Central Administration for Transport.

Wollweber's personal appearance is striking, and displeasing. He is a heavy-set man, weight around 200, height about 5' 5". His face is fleshy, blotched from the effects of alcohol, and pockmarked from disease. His hair is dark blond (by now probably getting grey) and is thinning. His teeth are in bad condition; the uppers are false. In spite of all this, most reports agree, he is a man of dynamic and almost hypnotic personality, felt strongly by anyone in his presence, and is an accomplished and convincing talker. He appears to exert a particularly fascinating influence over women, an advantage he has not failed to exploit to the utmost, seldom having been without a mistress.<sup>1</sup> He likes to drink, and does drink a great deal, but apparently with regard for circumstances. As Jan Valtin puts it, "Wollweber was a heavy drinker, though he hardly ever touched a drop of alcohol unless he felt himself perfectly safe from the long arms of his many enemies."

Although a fervent revolutionary, Wollweber was and still is first and foremost a German Communist, and a member of the German Party. He is described in Out of the Night as a local patriot, a capable comrade, but no internationalist. He was inordinately proud of the German Party, and sometimes jurisdictional disputes sprang up between him and leaders of the Comintern's Western European Bureau, who were more inclined to take the supranational view. Wollweber returned at least once to Germany during the Nazi regime and devoted his major efforts at all

1. Definite information on Wollweber's possible marriage is lacking. A report that he married Gudrun Wiik (see attached list) is not substantiated. Another unconfirmed report states that his wife is, or was, Sylvia Sansing, a Norwegian, sister of Arthur Sansing.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

times to insuring the continued life of the KPD. Now he is back once more in Germany, taking up arms again on the ground where he most enjoys the battle.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## APPENDIX

Persons connected with Wollweber and the ISH,

The following list contains the names of those persons known to have been members of the old ISH and related organizations or to have been connected with Ernst Wollweber in his sabotage and espionage activities. A brief statement of the work, pertinent dates, and present whereabouts of each person is also given, where such information is available. The list is intended to serve as a reference [REDACTED]

25X1C8b

25X1C8b

Information herein given was taken from various intelligence reports and from the following two books:

Jan Valtin, Out of the Night, Garden City Publishing Co., 1942  
Kurt Singer, Duel for the Northland, McBride & Co., 1943

Unfortunately the personal data given below cannot be considered up to date; moreover, there is no sure way of evaluating all the information garnered from the two books named above (where entries stem from these sources, indication is made in the body of the list).

It has been particularly difficult to ascertain the correct spelling of names: in some cases four different spellings were encountered in as many references. [REDACTED]

25X1C8b

25X1C3b1

~~SECRET~~

Next 12 Page(s) In Document Exempt